

In the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A method of manufacturing a bituminous coated aggregate mix comprising aggregate coated with bitumen, said aggregate itself comprising fine particles and chippings lying in the range 4 mm to 20 mm, said method comprising at least the following steps:

(a) drying a first portion of the aggregate that has substantially no fines by heating to a temperature which is not less than 100 °C, at least some of the aggregate is dried by heating;

(b) an intermediate mix is formed by coating a said first portion of the aggregate ~~that has substantially no fines~~ with hot bitumen; and

(c) mixing a second portion of the aggregate that comprises sand and fines that is wet and unheated with the intermediate mix obtained at step (b);

~~wherein, during step (a), only said first portion of the aggregate is heated and wherein, during step (c), the second portion of the aggregate that is mixed with the intermediate mix, is constituted by wet aggregate.~~

Claim 2 (canceled)

Claim 3 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (c), the second portion of the aggregate, which is mixed with the intermediate mix, is constituted by aggregate at ambient temperature.

Claim 4 (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, in which the first portion of the aggregate comprises chippings lying in the range 4 mm to 20 mm, whereas the second portion of the aggregate comprises sand and fines only.

Claim 5 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which the first portion of the aggregate further comprises sand having a particle size greater than 2 mm.

Claim 6 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which the second portion of the aggregate represents in the range 15% by weight of the aggregate to 75% by weight of the aggregate.

Claim 7 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which the second portion of the aggregate has a water content lying in the range 2% by weight to 5% by weight, and preferably about 3.5% by weight, before it is mixed with said intermediate mix.

Claim 8 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (a), the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature lying in the range 100°C to 160°C, and preferably in the range 110°C to 130°C, and said temperature is such that, after step (c), the coated aggregate mix is at a temperature lying in the range 60°C to 100°C.

Claim 9 (original) A method according to claim 8, in which, during step (c), a quantity of water is added to the mix, which quantity of water is sufficient for said water to vaporize in part, and to cause the bitumen to expand.

Claim 10 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (c), a quantity of water is added to the mix, which quantity of water is sufficient for water to remain in the bituminous coated aggregate mix after step (c).

Claim 11 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (a), the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature lying in the range 180°C to 220°C, and preferably about 200°C, and said temperature of the first portion of the aggregate is such that, after step (c), the coated aggregate mix is at a temperature lying in the range 100°C to 150°C, and preferably about 130°C.

Claim 12 (original) A method according to claim 1, in which all of the bitumen that enters into the composition of the bituminous coated aggregate mix is added to the mix during step (b).

Claim 13 (new) A method of manufacturing a bituminous coated aggregate mix comprising aggregate coated with bitumen, said aggregate itself comprising fine particles and chippings lying in the range 4 mm to 20 mm, said method comprising at least the following steps:

drying a first portion of the aggregate that has substantially no fines by heating to a temperature which is not less than 100 °C;

mixing the first portion with a second portion of the aggregate and with hot bitumen, the second portion of the aggregate comprising sand and fines and being wet and unheated.

Claim 14 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which the second portion of the aggregate is constituted by aggregate at ambient temperature.

Claim 15 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which the first portion of the aggregate comprises chippings lying in the range 4 mm to 20 mm, whereas the second portion of the aggregate comprises sand and fines only.

Claim 16 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which the first portion of the aggregate further comprises sand having a particle size greater than 2 mm.

Claim 17 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which the second portion of the aggregate represents in the range 15% by weight of the aggregate to 75% by weight of the aggregate.

Claim 18 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which the second portion of the aggregate has a water content lying in the range 2% by weight to 5% by weight, and preferably about 3.5% by weight, before it is mixed with said first portion of the aggregate and said hot bitumen.

Claim 19 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature lying in the range 100°C to 160°C, and preferably in the range 110°C to 130°C, and said temperature is such that, after mixing the first and second portions of the aggregate with the hot bitumen, the coated aggregate mix is at a temperature lying in the range 60°C to 100°C.

Claim 20 (new) A method according to claim 19, in which, a quantity of water is added during mixing the first and second portions of the aggregate with the hot bitumen, which quantity of water is sufficient for said water to vaporize in part, and to cause the bitumen to expand.

Claim 21 (new) A method according to claim 13, in which a quantity of water is added during mixing the first and second portions of the aggregate with the hot bitumen, which quantity of water is sufficient for water to remain in the bituminous coated aggregate mix after mixing.

Claim 22 (new) A method according to claim 13, wherein the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature lying in the range 180°C to 220°C, and preferably about 200°C, and said temperature of the first portion of the aggregate is such that, after mixing with the second portion of the aggregate and the hot bitumen, the coated aggregate mix is at a temperature lying in the range 100°C to 150°C, and preferably about 130°C.

Claim 23 (new) A method according to claim 1, wherein water contained in the second portion of the aggregate is vaporized during mixing with the first portion of the chippings and the hot bitumen.

Claim 24 (new) A method according to claim 23, wherein vaporization of said water causes said bitumen to expand.

Appl. No. 10/624,023
Amdt. A dated September 28, 2005
Reply to O.A. March 29, 2005

Claim 25 (new) A method according to claim 13, wherein water contained in the second portion of the aggregate is vaporized during mixing with the first portion of the chippings and the hot bitumen.